



**2009 - 2010
Final Report**

sacgrandjury.org

Folsom State Prison

On November 5, 2009, the Sacramento County Grand Jury toured Folsom State Prison (FSP). This tour was pursuant to Penal Code Section 919(b), which states, "The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county."

Opened in 1880, Folsom State Prison (FSP) is the second oldest prison in California. (San Quentin State Prison is the oldest.) FSP was built on a 40-acre parcel. Its responsibility is to house medium security inmates in a secure and effective manner consistent with state, federal and relevant case laws. At the time of this tour the inmate population was 3,918 and FSP employed a total of 1,131 staff members. FSP contains four housing units with the most notable two being B-Block, the original cellblock, and Building 1, the largest prison housing building west of the Rockies. B-Block is constructed of granite rock and only houses Level 2 inmates; the average age of these inmates is 46 years old and most have received a sentence of 25 years to life. Building 1 houses 1,240 Level 3 inmates; its cellblock is five tiers high with 240 inmates on each of the four sides. This housing unit has a dining area, medical area, and yard. Twelve correctional officers and four armed officers secure the building. The remaining units at FSP are generally two-sided, five tiers high with 38-78 cells on each side. The cells are designed for double occupancy and each building has access to a yard and dining area.

A riot occurred on October 9, 2009, one of many that have occurred in recent years. In early November, 69% of the inmates remained on lockdown status due to riots between white and black inmates. As part of an effort to deter and document violent incidents, high definition cameras are being installed on the main yard, at a cost of \$100,000. These cameras will assist in identifying inmates who are involved in a disturbance and in prosecuting them when warranted. The cameras will improve the safety of civilian workers, staff, and inmates.

Inmates that meet the prison standard of good behavior have access to a variety of vocational/educational training as well as self-help programs. Vocational programs offered to inmates are metal fabrication, license plate production, electronics, auto mechanics and welding. These programs are designed to give inmates an opportunity to learn a trade prior to their parole. The goal of these programs is to reduce recidivism. Unfortunately, due to the state of the economy, this grand jury has concerns that many of these much needed programs may be eliminated, leaving inmates with few, if any, trade or life skills, and California prisons will continue to lead the nation in recidivism.¹

Folsom State Prison has a historical atmosphere and the grand jury found the visit to be very informative.

¹ On the State of California website, the governor points out that the ultimate goal of these programs is to reduce recidivism, which currently stands at 70%, the highest in the nation. The governor further points out, "We cannot fix our prisons without reducing recidivism, and we cannot reduce recidivism without creating more space and programs for prisons." (<http://gov.ca.gov/index.php/fact-sheet/1084/>)